

The Open Mike^{District 2}



A Newsletter From Councilman **Mike Knapp**

Volume 5, Number 3

July 2009

A Moment at the Mike

Delay of Game



Councilmember Knapp

Making unpleasant decisions is never easy. Ask anyone if they'd like to make a tough decision now -- one that might result in a bit of discomfort, grumbling, or a difficult conversation -- or put it off until later, chances are most will want to put off the inevitable as long as possible. And that's understandable -- we're only human, after all. Pain hurts.

But when it comes to money -- *especially* when it comes to your money -- and the fiscal health of the county, we can't afford to put off making the hard decisions. Delaying our obligations simply because some of our decisions may be unpopular or may not make everyone happy . . . well, that not only postpones the inevitable, but it's unfair to you. You deserve a true picture of what you're getting for your money. We shouldn't lead you to think everything is fine on the road you're on when the bridge is still out just ahead.

That's a long way of saying that I'm not happy with what we did in the final budget for fiscal year 2010. We took too many shortcuts and brandished too many gimmicks in the name of expediency. The result was a \$3.73 billion budget that may require us to make deeper cuts instead of fixing them. The duct tape is there, certainly -- but it may not hold for long. We're still going to have to fix the underlying problems, not tape over or mask them. Delaying tough decisions doesn't solve the problem -- and in some cases, as we saw with last month's horrifying Metro crash, waiting too long does more than cost money, it can cost lives.

Still, it can be done -- and we'll start our work for the FY2011 in earnest later this summer. In the meantime, [here's information on the budget the Council approved for FY2010](#). And as always, let me know what's on your mind. [Drop me a line](#), or give me a call at (240) 777-7955.

Regards,

Michael J. Knapp
Councilmember, District 2

The Metro Crash of 2009

Lessons from a Tragedy

The images are horrifying. The skin of a Metro train peeled back like a candy wrapper, its insides burnt. Passengers holding blood-stained rags to their faces, others limping away with the help of doctors, fire fighters, even other passengers. More horrifying, nine dead – including a driver who appears to have done everything right. This sort of thing doesn't happen here, does it?

And yet, it did.

An investigation is underway, and it will likely be months before we know exactly what went wrong, but one thing is for certain: the forty-year-old Metro system is wearing out. We're not taking good care of what we have—and for too long, Metro has been running on fumes, waiting for the funding needed to update old and outdated equipment. And every year, the promised investments in Metro never materialize. Should we really be surprised when the system finally buckles with age?

The question I keep hearing is *why?* Why are we so slow to invest in the mass transit system that serves the nation's capital? Considering that Metro serves not only millions of residents but millions of tourists each year, wouldn't we want to ensure that Metro has a steady stream of funding? Shouldn't funding for Metro be a no-brainer, an automatic for each year?

The answer may surprise you.

Incredibly, Metro is the only major mass transit system in the nation that does not have a dedicated source of funding – that is, there is no regularly scheduled, regularly funded flow of money specifically targeted to the Metro system each year. Instead, Metro is subject to administration by – and discretionary funding from – four separate jurisdictions: Maryland, Virginia, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. government.

In 2004, a blue ribbon task force was assembled through the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) to look at the long term fiscal health of Metro. This prestigious group recognized the dire consequences for Metro if dedicated funding from all of its partners was not quickly achieved. In fact, because Metro was already seeing serious service issues, all of the local partners (MD, DC and VA) provided stop gap funding through the "Metro Matters" program. One partner that was absent then, and continues to be today, is the federal government.

This year, Congress approved the dedicated funding legislation. The catch? No money has actually been appropriated by the federal government, and the President didn't request any funding for Metro in his budget proposal.

As a result of the blue ribbon task force recommendations, I, and many other regional leaders, successfully advocated for the local partners to provide \$1.5 billion over 10 years for dedicated Metro funding.

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Parking Ban Now In Effect

New Law Restricts Parking of Recreational, Heavy Commercial Vehicles

I'm pleased to announce that on January 27, the Montgomery County Council unanimously passed **Bill 27-08: Motor Vehicles and Traffic Parking Regulations Commercial Vehicles, Recreational Vehicles, and Buses**. This bill, which I introduced on June 24, 2008, addresses the proliferation of these vehicles on many neighborhood streets, and in many circumstances, affecting safety on the streets because they overwhelm sightlines.

Bill 27-08, which took effect on July 1, limits the parking of heavy commercial vehicles to public roads where both sides of the street are zoned for industrial use. In addition the bill prohibits parking of recreational vehicles on public roadways. The bill allows recreational vehicles to be parked on a road for up to 18 hours while engaged in loading and unloading.



Making roads safe for all drivers and pedestrians was the main thrust behind the legislation. Over the past five years, I have heard numerous concerns from police and residents that large vehicles were limiting the line of sight on roads and making it difficult to make turns on narrow neighborhood streets and endangering pedestrian safety.

I appreciate all of the e-mails and phone calls we received on this issue. Your input was very helpful as we moved forward with the legislation.

Tragedy

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To their enormous credit, the Congressional delegation for the Washington, DC region – including our Maryland Senators and Congressmen – have been hugely supportive of the idea of dedicated funding for several years, sponsoring legislation in the last few Congressional sessions to provide Metro with \$1.5 billion in dedicated funding. The bill requires Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia to create similar dedicated funding streams for Metro. Doing so then “triggers” the release of the \$1.5 billion for Metro.

This year, Congress approved the dedicated funding legislation. The catch? No money has actually been appropriated by the federal government, and the President didn't request any funding for Metro in his budget proposal. That means that despite the efforts of our state – and Virginia and DC -- there's no money there to trigger.

It now falls into the hands of Congressional appropriators to find the money for Metro – and fortunately, our delegation has written a letter asking for the money. Still, \$1.5 billion will only be a small down payment on more than \$10 billion worth of maintenance and repair – and that's just to take care of what we already have. Extending the red line and building a new purple line will only increase the costs of maintenance as more much needed trains and tracks are added to the system.

I'm guardedly optimistic that Congress will uphold its commitment to Metro this year -- but this year's not enough. Local governments have already shown their willingness to provide Metro with a dedicated source of funding. The President and Congress need to do the same.

County Planners Tout Bus Rapid Transit for CCT

Knapp Testifies for CCT Light Rail Option, Express Toll Lanes

Following a public hearing in June, Montgomery County planners have recommended bus rapid transit, a system designed to move transit vehicles past traffic congestion on dedicated lanes, for the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT), a planned public transportation project linking Shady Grove with Clarksburg.

The CCT has long been proposed along I-270, and the Planning Board has featured the CCT as an integral part of master plans for Gaithersburg West and Germantown. The transit route would support a growing number of workers and proposed new residences in those areas. In the state report, transportation planners evaluated premium bus, light rail and bus rapid transit. The CCT is expected to carry up to 27,000 people daily by 2030.

Following recommendations rolled out in the draft Gaithersburg West Master Plan, planners have endorsed a route for the CCT that follows a long-established alignment from the Shady Grove Metro Station through Gaithersburg, Middlebrook and Germantown on its way to Clarksburg. However, planners recommend a change to the previously planned route through the Life Sciences Center near Gaithersburg.

Responding to a Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) report, planners also addressed a proposed expansion of I-270 as another strategy to improve mobility in the heavily traveled corridor. The expansion could include preferential lanes for high occupancy vehicles and drivers willing to pay a toll. Both projects would try to alleviate chronic traffic concerns in the I-270 Corridor, the economic engine of Montgomery County.

Planners made their recommendations based on MDOT's Alternatives Analysis/Environmental Assessment report. Their recommendations go to the Planning Board, which has scheduled a July 6 public hearing to allow residents and others to have their say.

The board's recommendation will be considered by the County Council's transportation committee on July 13. Once the Council has collected input, it will send the county's collective position on the two transportation projects back to the state.

I testified before the planners at the June hearing, and frankly, I'm disappointed in the decision to support bus rapid transit rather than light rail. On the next few pages, you'll find the text of the remarks I delivered that afternoon.

Contact Me!



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Testimony of Councilmember Mike Knapp Maryland Department of Transportation I-270/US 15 Multi-Modal Corridor Study Public Hearing

June 16, 2009

Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Mike Knapp, and I am the Montgomery County Councilmember representing District 2 – the Upcounty region, which would perhaps be the area most widely served by the joint projects being discussed today. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this evening.

I appreciate this project's comprehensive approach to transportation solutions—and I can assure you that the modifications to the I-270 highway and the establishment of the Corridor Cities Transitway are both vital to the continued growth and success of Montgomery County. I-270 has widened and grown over the past fifty years – but the population growth during the same time period requires more action. From a pure county resident and commuter point-of-view, improvements to I-270 and US 15 are welcome indeed. Given the options presented in the Alternatives Analysis, I support the use of Express Toll Lanes for the northern stretch of I-270. And given that the road footprint is the same for the addition of 2 or 4 lanes, I support the maximum number of lanes. I would also ask that you work closely with local jurisdictions to minimize the impact on individual homeowners.

. . . in order to reach our true potential as the East Coast region's high-tech hub, we need to improve our transit and infrastructure. I strongly support the light rail option as the best way to achieve our economic development goals.

I also think we need to do more than think locally. The I-270 doesn't just serve our community; for millions of visitors, it's the gateway to the Nation's Capital. It's also the way we stay connected to our neighbors in Virginia, Pennsylvania, West Virginia—and they to us. So, we should view any improvements systemically. For example, northern Virginia is implementing so-called "HOT" lanes from the I-95 to the American Legion bridge . . . where they suddenly disappear once drivers reach Maryland, which will cause confusion and snarls. I know there is a West Side Mobility Study underway to look at some of this region's macro road issues and I encourage you to work expeditiously on this next step to have as comprehensive and coordinated an approach as possible when work begins.

Now I'd like to devote the rest of my remarks to one of the most important projects in the region, the Corridor Cities Transitway, or CCT.

As you well know, the CCT can trace its ancestry all the way back to the 1964 General Plan of Montgomery County as the Red Line extension linking Shady Grove to Clarksburg. And because it's been on the books for so long – more than 40 years – we're prepared. The majority of the rights-of-way are under public control or protective easement and our master plans have identified the sites needed for stations and parking lots, and everything one needs for a quality

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Testimony

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transit system. Additionally, as the Council begins to work in earnest on completing the Germantown Master Plan and the upcoming Gaithersburg West Master Plan, we're committed to keeping the CCT aligned with land use patterns so that development will serve transit and vice versa. The council will be taking a close look at a number of suggested amendments to the CCT alignment that differ from this draft AA/ES and will have specific recommendations going forward. I ask for your assistance in ensuring that any recommended alternatives that are ultimately incorporated not cause delay in the project schedule for the CCT.

The project was also included in the recent Federal Transportation Authorization bill, making it eligible for federal assistance. We've been good stewards, and we've been forward thinking. In short, we're ready.

We've planned transit-friendly businesses and communities, like the Shady Grove Life Sciences Center, King Farm, Gaithersburg, Germantown, and Clarksburg—all successful in their own right. But, all of these communities, in fact, were designed with the assumption that the CCT and other road improvements would be there to serve their communities.

From an economic development standpoint, the so-called "high tech corridor" along the I-270 is home to some of the most vigorous and exciting high-tech companies in the nation – in fact, there are few places in the country that do biotechnology as well as we do here in Montgomery County. But in order to reach our true potential as the East Coast region's high-tech hub, we need to improve our transit and infrastructure. I strongly support the light rail option as the best way to achieve our economic development goals. This is the mode that produces the most significant permanent economic benefit.

The Montgomery County Council supports this project, and we look forward to working with you as we begin to look at options for funding the CCT. There are those who will say that, given the current economy, we should look at the lowest cost alternatives. But the costs associated with the CCT are inexpensive relative to the costs of any other transit options in the region and the state. We should pick the best alternative to achieve the strongest communities possible.

While the CCT, as I noted earlier, is eligible for federal funding through the Federal Transportation Authorization bill, I caution you to resist the urge to put all of our eggs in that funding basket. For one thing, doing so puts us in a relationship with a partner who provides the lowest percent of the funding, and yet nearly a hundred percent of the direction. Is it worth it to forfeit our own vision for such a small percentage of federal funding? The Dulles rail project received only 16 percent of its funds federally, and then was promptly tied up in knots with the FTA. Frankly, we need to learn from their example. We should explore something new, perhaps a dynamic public/private partnership between the State of Maryland, Montgomery County, and the private sector.

The corridor needs both highway and transit improvements to handle our projected growth. The County Council stands ready to work with you, and I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you this evening.

Chairman's Corner

PHED Looks at Code Enforcement, Sector Plans



As we make our way toward the summer break, the Planning, Housing & Economic Development Committee (PHED) continues its work on the Germantown and Wheaton sector plans, and we'll spend a long afternoon looking into code enforcement issues on some of those little issues that matter a lot: residential off-street parking, storage of unused vehicles, and the process for issuing and appealing a permit violation. We'll also have a discussion with the Department of Economic Development, and listen to some fiscal updates.

As always, if you've got something to say about any of these issues, [drop me an e-mail](#) or call me at (240) 777-7955.

PHED Committee Schedule

The information is subject to change, so please check the Council's website as dates near for updated information. Unless otherwise indicated, all committee meetings will convene in the 3rd Floor Council Meeting Room of the Council Office Building.

DATE	TIME	MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION
July 13	2:00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wheaton CBD Sector Plan Sectional Map Amendment (G-883) - Code Enforcement Issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ZTA 09-03: Home Occupations and Residential Off-Street Parking - Bill 22-09: Enforcement of County Laws - Notice of Violation - Appeals - Bill 23-09: Unused Vehicles, Storage - Bill 24-09: Buildings, Permits and Inspections
July 20	2:00 p.m.	- Discussion with Department of Economic Development - strategic items
July 27	2:00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quarterly fiscal update - Planning Department - Quarterly fiscal update - Enterprise Fund - Update - Zoning Ordinance Rewrite

How To Properly Dispose of Worn Out American Flags

Each year, around the Fourth of July, I receive questions about how to properly dispose of worn out American flags. It's a good question. The only guidance provided by federal law is found in the United States Code at Title 4, Chapter 1, Section 8(k), which reads, in its entirety:

"The flag, when it is in such condition that it is no longer a fitting emblem for display, should be destroyed in a dignified way, preferably by burning."

Many of us, however, are still uncomfortable with the idea of burning a flag, wondering if we're doing so in a way that is properly "dignified." Fortunately, there is some help available.

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Germantown Sector Plan Under Review

The Planning, Housing and Economic Development (PHED) Committee is currently reviewing updates to the 1989 Germantown Master Plan. The plan -- known as the Germantown Sector Plan -- focuses on 2,400 acres of land in the employment and town center areas of Germantown. The 1989 Master Plan will remain in effect for other areas of Germantown.

The PHED committee has held a number of worksessions where we'll review the Germantown Sector Plan and discuss what it means for residents, nearby communities, the county, and the state.

This sector plan represents a comprehensive vision of Germantown -- now home to the second largest population cluster in Maryland -- and I'm very excited and encouraged by the progress that's been made so far.

Below you will find the latest schedule, and information the committee has received regarding the Germantown Sector Plan. Information can change quickly, so for the most up-to-date information, be sure to check my homepage at <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/mikeknapp>.

If you still can't find what you are looking for, please don't hesitate to contact me at 240-777-7955 or [click here to send me an e-mail](#).



Councilmember Knapp at BlackRock in Germantown's Town Center.

Germantown Sector Plan Schedule

DATE	TIME	MEETING	LOCATION
July 14	10:20 a.m.	Council Work Session	COB, 3rd Floor Hearing Room
July 28	TBD	Council Work Session, if needed	COB, 3rd Floor Hearing Room
September 15	TBD	Council Action	COB, 3rd Floor Hearing Room

Flags

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Many units of the American Legion provide suitably respectful ceremonies for the disposal of worn flags. In fact, many American Legions perform the ceremony on Flag Day. [Click here](#) to find an American Legion near you -- then check with them to see if they dispose of old flags.

You can also find more information at the American Legion website by [clicking here](#), and at the Veterans of Foreign Wars website by [clicking here](#).

County's Summer Food Service Program Expanded



Councilmember Knapp shares a moment with one of the children participating in the county's free summer lunch program, on June 28 at Rolling Terrace Elementary School.

As a member of the County Council's Education Committee, I've had the pleasure of working with Chairwoman Valerie Ervin and committee member Phil Andrews over the past year on the expansion of the county's Summer Food Service program. The Summer Food Service Program provides nutritious meals to children when school closes and is designed to bridge the summer vacation "nutrition gap."

Last summer the number of sites increased from 80 to 105 and we opened the County's first free walk-in site. Approximately 27% of children in Montgomery County or 37,640 students are eligible for free or reduced meals during the school year.

The Summer Food Service Program feeds an average of 6,000 – 7,000 children each day at 105 sites throughout the county. This summer, we're opening five more free sites.

At a free site, children from the surrounding area can show up and receive a free lunch without having to be part of a program at that location. Last year's free walk-in site was Georgian Forest Elementary School (D-4) in the Kennedy Cluster. Free sites are chosen based the schools eligibility (school must be at least 50% FARMS), its location within the community, and the individual school's interest in joining the program.

The six free sites are: Georgian Forest Elementary School, Kennedy High School, Strathmore Elementary School, Maryvale Elementary School, Rolling Terrace Elementary School, and Summit Hall Elementary School.

The Summer Food Service Program was created in 1976 to ensure that children in lower income areas could continue to receive nutritious meals during the summer months when school breakfast and lunches are not available. The program provides breakfast and lunch to eligible children and teenagers, 18 years and younger, at approved sites. Persons over 18 years of age who have been determined mentally or physically handicapped and who participate in a public or private non-profit school program for the handicapped during the school year are eligible to receive meal benefits.

If you run or know of a summer program for children under eighteen, the program may be eligible to receive free summer lunch. For more information, [click here](#) or call (301) 840-8170.

Step Up To *The Open Mike* -- Subscribe!

The Open Mike is an electronic newsletter published monthly by Councilmember Michael J. Knapp (District 2). If you would like to be added to the electronic distribution list, please subscribe on the Council's home page -- and be sure to indicate you'd like to receive to information on ***District 2***.

Preserving Our Agricultural Heritage

Find and Visit a Farmers Market in Your Community

One of the real benefits of living in the Upcounty is that we're near -- or even in -- Montgomery County's 93,000 acre Agricultural Reserve. We're fortunate to have so much farming going on in the area, because it means we not only get the spectacular views of working farms as we drive along the back roads, but also because we have the opportunity to purchase locally-grown fruits, vegetables and other products that haven't been sitting in the back of a truck for weeks on end getting here.

Our county is home to countless farmers markets, selling a wide variety of goods from strawberries to hay to beef. And if you're worried it's difficult to find one in our sprawling county, help has arrived. The Montgomery County Department of Economic Development has a website devoted to farmers markets.



Take part in a transaction as old as Montgomery County itself -- visit a farmer's market. [Click here to visit the county's home page for farmer's markets](#). For a copy of the latest Farmers Market flyer, with locations, hours of operation, and phone numbers, [click here](#).

All Roads Lead to the Fair

The Montgomery County Agricultural Fair, which will be held August 14 - 22, is celebrating its 61st anniversary this year.

The fair was born out of the desire of 4-H leaders to provide a county show for 4-H members in Montgomery County to exhibit their prize livestock, garden and home economics projects. Their initial meeting on a cold, March night in Rockville in 1945 started what today is the largest county fair in the State of Maryland.



This year's fair promises something for everyone: everything from 4-H demonstrations and a monster truck show to a toilet decorating contest and deep fried Oreos. And, we can't forget about the carnival rides. For more information on the fair including a full list of events, fair hours, admissions and directions, [click here](#).

I'll see you at the fair.

Vox Pops

Readers Check In on Bus Fares, Ambulance Fees, Speed Cameras

Ride On Route 70 Fare Increase Draws Fire



"I take the # 70 express bus from Milestone to NIH on a daily basis and was infuriated when the fare rose from 55 cents each way (using a monthly pass) to \$3.00 dollars. Judging from the conversations on the bus tonight, I am not alone. I am disturbed on a number of fronts. One, if the measure was "passed" on April 21 as the fliers that were handed out indicate, why did it take over 2 months to notify riders of the fare increase? Two, nearly a 6 fold increase!!!! That is not only absurd but criminal. How can you politicians claim to look-out for constituents when you raise fares this much and notify us 10 days before it goes into effect? Third, the gall to use Metro bus fares as a comparison to raise fares. Excuse me, but I pay taxes in Montgomery County which help subsidize (along with your salary) these buses and not "Metro" county. This was the one perk I had as a "gouged" taxpayer and now that's gone . . . I for one cannot wait for elections again to actively exercise my dislike of this increase. Judging from other constituents, they will be happy too." – Tom

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County Council Public Hearings Calendar

Council Seeks Input on Parking Fees, Burtonsville

Don't be shy! The County Council regularly holds public hearings at which we actively seek your input, thoughts, comments, and suggestions. The policies, amendments, and legislation under consideration aren't just pieces of paper; they have a very real impact on you and the lives of your fellow citizens. For this reason, residents are always encouraged to attend the public hearings and give us your views.

Hearings are held in the Council's main meeting room on the 3rd Floor of the County Office Building at 100 Maryland Avenue in Rockville. ([Click here for a map.](#)) If you wish to testify on any of the items listed below, please call (240) 777-7931.

One more thing -- the hearing schedule can change rapidly, so always check the [County Council's home page](#) to get the most up-to-date information.

DATE	TIME	MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION
July 21	1:30 p.m.	ZTA 09-04: Rural Neighborhood Cluster (RNC) Zones - Equestrian Facilities
		Special Appropriation to MCPS FY2010 Capital Budget and Amendment to the FY2009-2014 Capital Improvements Program (CIP) - \$602,651 for Planned Lifecycle Asset Replacement
July 28	1:30 p.m.	SRA 09-02: Subdivision Approval - Conflict Resolution
		ZTA 09-05: Burtonsville Overlay Zone - Allowed uses

The Road Scholar

Modifications Planned for MD 355 in Clarksburg

Got a road that needs repairing? A traffic light that's out? Is there a street or intersection that you think needs a stop sign or crosswalk? One of my responsibilities is to make sure someone knows about it -- and to do what I can to get you information on your question or request as quickly as possible.

I stay in regular contact with the [Montgomery County Department of Transportation](#) (DOT) and the [Maryland State Highways Administration](#) (MSHA), and provide each agency with a list of projects that need addressing in the Upcounty. Both agencies receive countless requests each week, and getting a response back can take some time. So bear with me -- if you don't see a particular project listed here, that doesn't mean it has been forgotten or neglected, but rather that I haven't received an updated report on its progress lately.

With this in mind, the Road Scholar section of *The Open Mike* provides an opportunity to give you the latest information I've received from DOT, MSHA, and others on the progress of requests that have been submitted on your behalf. It's also an opportunity for you to [let me know](#) of other projects that may need to be undertaken in your community.

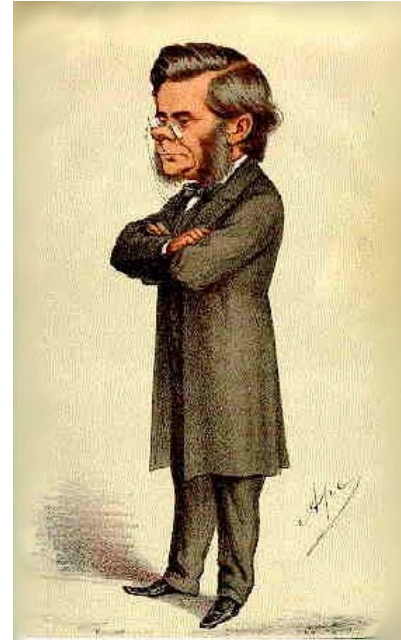
Maryland State Highways Administration

Modifications to MD 355 North of Ridge Road (Clarksburg): In response to questions from Clarksburg residents about long lines of traffic waiting to turn left from MD 355 (Frederick Road) at West Old Baltimore Road, MSHA Assistant District Engineer Jeffrey Wentz has provided the following information:

"MD 355 north of MD 27 (Ridge Road) towards MD 121 (Clarksburg Road) is to be modified as part of development in the area. These modifications, which include additional travel lanes in each direction, are conditioned upon certain building levels by the developer. As construction has greatly slowed due to the recent economic situation, it is not known as to when these modifications may take place.

"As an interim to the developer's project, the SHA has reviewed this intersection and determined that a left turn lane was needed to alleviate the queuing that you described. A project has been initiated to install a left turn lane; however, the SHA is also impacted by the current economic situation and funding for construction is not available at this time. A schedule for when this improvement will be installed, therefore, has not been established. As the economic situation improves and funding becomes available, it is expected that this project will be completed."

My thanks to Mr. Wentz for the update.



Got a question or suggestion about road repairs in your area? [E-mail the Road Scholar](#) and let us know.

Vox Pops

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"I live just outside of Germantown and work in Bethesda. I have been riding the Route-70 Express bus daily for the past 8 years which goes from Milestone in Germantown to Bethesda. I have been purchasing the monthly passes (current cost \$25). I was presented with a flyer at the bus stop Tuesday morning . . . This increases my (and many others) commuting costs from \$25 per month to \$124 per month. That is a 400% increase. I (and I'm sure many others) cannot afford this substantial increase. This will result in more cars back on the road, more congestion, more accidents, and less revenue. I understand the economy is difficult for everyone and I understand that costs go up but it seems unbelievable that costs can be raised 400%. I'm not sure what you can do but I felt it important to share my dismay that a system designed to reduce the number of vehicles on the roads, especially during rush periods (which is what the Route-70 serves) would consider a 400% increase acceptable." -- *Nancy*

"I don't understand how this increase could be approved at more than double the current fare, especially with the service we bus riders experience. The 70 bus route was originally part of a pilot program intended to relieve congestion on 270. The route is obviously not intended to be a convenience for the riders as we routinely wait in the seasonal cold, wet, windy, or humid conditions for buses that are late or never arrive, leak in the rain, lack air conditioning in the summer, have broken windows, break down on 270 and require dangerous transfers to another bus, and do not have adequate seating (primarily because the previously scheduled bus did not arrive). And, now I am being requested to pay \$3.00 for a one-way fare for the privilege of putting up with all these problems? . . . I cannot speak for everyone, but Ride-On just lost me as a customer due to these extreme prices. I am willing to put up with shoddy service and buses for \$1.25 one way, but not for \$3.00." -- *Kim*

No More Roads for Private Vehicles

"This is a request to eliminate M-83 from the Germantown Master Plan. I worked on the Obama campaign because our president recognized the need for a new energy policy that would reduce carbon emissions and enhance public transport. This is what we need to do in Montgomery County, not build more roads for private vehicles.



"I knocked on doors of 86 Democrats and asked them to get out and vote for Nancy Navarro on the recent general election day because she supports greater assistance to working class citizens. Please follow their example and cancel plans for the M-83. Do not act like Republicans!" -- *David, Washington DC*

Ambulance Fee? What Ambulance Fee?

"I am delighted to hear that I can claim services and not pay for them? I always used to think that if I claim goods or services with a specific price tag, I had to actually pay for them. That is what I have been doing my entire life. It is interesting to find out that I most likely was not really supposed to do that?

"It is fascinating to me to hear the discussion about the ambulance fee. Some of my local officials actually are sending out the message- - which most privileged people are living by, in the first place: not paying, as they know they can get away with it!?? --Then we have the ethical, good, silly citizen like myself who doesn't claim things, unless she can pay the cost. I personally would

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Vox Pops

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not call an ambulance if I am told that the ride will cost me an amount that I don't have; at least as long as it is in my power. And if I do, I would feel very bad about it and stress over it??! Why do I have to even have this discussion--am I not doing enough, to deserve the right to call an ambulance?

"I am seriously confused. Can you explain what you my elected officials are trying to communicate to Montgomery County citizens like myself? What is the proposal exactly? All I am asking you to do is, if I am not required to pay for something, please make sure that you tell me that, prior to claiming a service! I am seriously confused about this discussion. But I will give everyone the benefit of the doubt. Can you please explain this fee, how it is supposed to work (for ethical, honest citizens, of course)?" -- *Alev*



DCRC: Model Plane Enthusiasts, But Not Model Citizens

"After many years I went out the model airplane field to fly my RC model. I am a Germantown Resident and was previously approved as a certified RC pilot and I am a current AMA member. I received a pretty frosty reception from a [District of Columbia Radio Control Club (DCRC)] member about me flying there. I ran into this before when the field was built with Taxpayer money and they were not going to let anyone but DCRC members fly there. I think some rules are needed but to force individuals to join a private club to use a public facility was wrong then and is wrong now. I would like you to remind these folks who paid for the facility and that as long as some simple rules are followed you should be able to fly there" -- *John, Germantown*

Call It A "Driving Passion"

"I would just like to let you know that it will become my passion to make sure EVERY INCUMBANT state and county official is not reelected until the unconstitutional speed cameras, with their artificially low speed limits dropping 10-25 MPH for a two block area, are removed from our streets." -- *Rich*

Speed Cameras Reasonable, Working

"I am a supporter of red-light and speed cameras. I think they are fair and feel they have definitely increased the safety and traffic flow of the roads that I travel in Montgomery county daily. I can't think of a reason to complain about them. I think 12 miles over the speed limit is quite generous. Some drivers use our roads as their own personal speedways. The fine with no points is minimal for breaking the law. If they generate revenue for the county it's OK by me. It's better than raising a utility or property taxes for instance.

"The fine, viewed by some as a 'tax' is only paid by someone who breaks the law. If you don't want the county to make money, don't speed. Hopefully the fines generated will be used to repair our roads. The roads here in Montgomery County are in abysmal shape. Also the speed/red light cameras cannot be accused of profiling, they are equal opportunity. I think it's great that police officers have the help of these cameras. They help to improve public safety in so many ways. It allows an already stretched to the max police force focus on other types of crime.

"Not everyone in Montgomery county is opposed to speed cameras. It's just those who want to break the law and gamble the odds of not getting caught who are the most vocal." -- *Anna Maria, Silver Spring*